

jobs younger people could fill. But that situation has changed—as unjustified as it was at the time—so our public policy today needs to be changed.

Because of my position as chairman of the Aging Committee, more acutely than others, I recognize the changing role of senior citizens in our society. This generation of older Americans has different responsibilities than past generations. We have seen a sharp rise in the number of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Furthermore, it is far more common for people to live into their eighties and nineties. Some of these very old Americans depend on their children who are often in their sixties to help care for them and pay for their at-home expenses, medical bills, groceries, and a host of other expenses. Eliminating the Social Security earnings limit will help raise the standard of living for these families.

While fixing this inequity in the retirement system will give fair treatment to those ages 65 to 69 who have paid into the program during their working years, I do not stand here and say that it is going to address Social Security's long-term demographic challenges.

When the baby boom generation comes on board, the revenue and benefit structure will not be able to sustain the obligations under current law. That is why I have worked with six of my Senate colleagues—Senators JUDD GREGG, BOB KERREY, JOHN BREAUX, FRED THOMPSON, CRAIG THOMAS, and CHUCK ROBB—to craft bipartisan Senate reform legislation.

Our bill, the Bipartisan Social Security Act, which happens to be S. 1383, is the only reform legislation which has been put forth in the Senate which would make the Social Security trust fund permanently solvent—meaning, as you have to look out 75 years, under existing law, to project its solvency, our legislation has been declared to accomplish that by the General Accounting Office. In fact, it is the only one before the Congress that does that.

I will continue to press ahead and work to build a consensus among our colleagues to save Social Security and achieve long-term solvency for generations to come.

We, as a Congress, must recognize that even in this era of surpluses—meaning budget surpluses—there are serious long-term financial problems facing Social Security. These problems do not go away because we have a surplus and a good economy. The longer we wait to address reform of Social Security, the more difficult the problems will be to address, and the less time the baby boom generation will have to prepare.

As a nation, we have an evolving definition of what it means to be old. Americans are living longer and in better health. The traditional retirement age comes too soon for older people

who want to or need to work past age 65. Some people want to retire; some people want to leave the workforce. Obviously, this legislation does not affect that decision of theirs. They can still do it. But if you want to contribute, if you want to remain productive, if you want to be in the workforce, by golly, through this legislation, we say we would love to have you do that. We remove economic disincentives to your doing that that are presently in the law.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise to address the body on the Social Security Earnings Test Elimination Act.

This is a good time. We are finally going to do something good for America's senior citizens. Americans should be free to work if they choose. With passage of this bill, we will help elderly Americans stay in the workforce longer. It should be their choice, not the Government's coercion, that determines whether they stay in that workforce a longer period of time.

They have spent a lifetime paying into the Social Security trust fund. It is simply not fair to deprive them of their Social Security benefits simply because they choose to stay in the workforce longer or choose to begin working again after retirement. That is common sense to me, and that is why this bill has so much appeal.

Particularly at a time when the cost of living is increasing, it is important to allow our seniors who choose to work or those who are forced to work because of rising prices to do so without being penalized.

I will talk about a particular individual in Kansas whom I had the privilege of meeting a month ago. His name is Ron Frampton, from Kingman, KS. He has farmed with his family most of his life. I met him when I was touring the Mize Manufacturing Company, a small manufacturer in Kingman, KS. Mr. Frampton came up to me as I was walking through the production line and asked me if we were going to eliminate the Social Security earnings test. I said I thought we were going to get the bill through. He said: Good; I need it.

Then he related to me his situation. He had worked on a family farm, was born on the farm and worked there all his life. Then in the 1980s, when we had a hard financial downturn for agriculture, he got caught in that downturn. His savings for his entire family were wrapped up in this farm. That is where he plowed all of his income, all of his savings, back into the farm. When the economy moved against him in the 1980s, he lost the farm and, thus, a big part of his life, a big part of his family, a big part of his sense of being. He also lost his retirement security that he had outside of Social Security. His retirement savings were that farm.

Now he has to work. He doesn't have the savings on which he had counted. He has to be able to work, and he needs the Social Security income as well. This bill helps Ron Frampton and his family in Kingman, KS. It addresses that need. It says if he needs to work, he wants to work, let him work, and don't penalize him for doing it.

This bill allows people older than 65 and younger than 70 to earn income without losing their Social Security benefits. That is as it should be. It is an important bipartisan measure that passed overwhelmingly in the House and, I expect, will pass overwhelmingly in the Senate. It sends an important and positive signal to America's retired workers who have spent their lives working to make this country better. We need this for America's seniors.

I am delighted we are going to pass this bill for all the seniors in the country but particularly for Mr. Frampton and for his family.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of Oregon). Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SENATOR MIKE CRAPO'S 100TH PRESIDING HOUR

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, today, I have the pleasure to announce that another freshman has achieved the 100 hour mark as presiding officer. Senator MIKE CRAPO is the latest recipient of the Senate's coveted Golden Gavel Award.

Since the 1960's, the Senate has recognized those dedicated Members who preside over the Senate for 100 hours with the Golden Gavel. This award continues to represent our appreciation for the time these dedicated Senators contribute to presiding over the U.S. Senate—a privileged and important duty.

On behalf of the Senate, I extend our sincere appreciation to Senator CRAPO and his diligent staff for their efforts and commitment to presiding duties during the 106th Congress.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM F. MOORE, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I wish to take this opportunity to recognize and say farewell to a Mississippi native and distinguished Air Force officer, Major General William F. Moore, upon his retirement from the Air Force after more than thirty years of commissioned service. Major General Moore has served with distinction, and it is my privilege to recognize his many accomplishments and to commend him for